

How can I talk about death with a child or teenager?

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY, HONESTLY, AND AGE APPROPRIATELY

Even very young children feel the pain of bereavement, but they learn to express their grief by **observing the adults** around them. After the loss, especially of a sibling or parent, **children need support, stability, and honesty.**

Telling the **truth in an empathetic**, age-appropriate way is often the most caring support we can offer a child.



Unlike adults, children often oscillate between different emotions in a short time, so don't be surprised to see a small child overwhelmed with sadness and within five minutes happily playing with his toys again.

VALIDATE THE CHILD'S FEELINGS

Children **can express a number of feelings** when they are grieving, the expression of which should be **welcomed and encouraged.**

Young children may be worried with thoughts such as losing the parent who knew how to cook their favorite dish, while adolescents understand the implications of death in a larger context.

INVOLVE SCHOOL

When children grow older, they spend more time outside the home. In challenging times, involve others to support them. Encourage **children to communicate their needs** at school for a sense of engagement and safety.

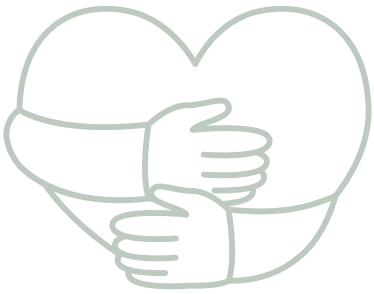


- When explaining death to a child, answer questions honestly using simple and concrete terms to prevent them from blaming themselves.
- Encourage children to express distressing feelings through stories, games, and artwork to understand how they are coping.



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Caring for a bereaved child can be a challenging task, both from a practical and emotional standpoint. Perhaps you are grieving too, which makes this task even more challenging.
- It's important to take your mental health seriously and seek support when you need it. Do it for your own good and for the good of your child or other loved ones.



THINGS I CAN DO TO HELP A BEREAVED CHILD

- **Allow** your children, however young, to **attend the funeral** if they wish.
- Pass on your **spiritual values** about life and death or pray with your child.
- **Meet regularly** as a family to find out how everyone is doing.
- Help your child find ways to **symbolize and memorialize the deceased**.
- Keep your **child's daily routine** as normal as possible.
- Pay attention to the way your **child plays**; This can be how they communicate pain.

DON'Ts



- Forcing a child to cry publicly if they don't want to.
- Giving false or confusing messages, such as "Grandma is sleeping now."
- Tell a child to stop crying because others might get angry.
- Try to protect a child from loss. Children understand much more than adults realize.
- Stifle your tears. By crying in front of your child, you send the message that it's okay for them to express feelings too.
- Turn your child into your personal confidant. Instead, rely on another adult or support group.

**Grief support
is a
responsibility
of all.**

**For more
information on
grief support,
please visit our
website.**

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